

Appropriations Committee

February 28, 2023

Public Hearing on H.B. 6659 An Act Concerning the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30, 2025, and Making Appropriations Therefor.

Good morning Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Berthel, Representative Nuccio and members of the Appropriations Committee.

My name is Denise Canady. I have spent the last 27 years working at Marrakech, a nonprofit organization that provides quality services to people with and without disabilities. I started my career at Marrakech as a student in their Academy for Human Services training back in 1995. I am now I am the Chief Clinical and Compliance Officer. Today I sit before you, not as the CCCO but as an advocate for the people we support and the amazing staff that show up to work every day to make sure our individuals are safe and cared for.

Marrakech is a partner of DDS, DMHAS. We have been in good standing with both agencies for many years. When there is a unique or unusual need, our partners look to us to help solve problems. We never say we cannot serve someone rather, we ask, how we can serve them. We provide services 24/7 and 365 days a year.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on H.B. 6659, the Governor's Budget. I am here to request that you increase funding for community nonprofits during the biennium by 9% in FY24, the first year, and 7% in FY25, the second year, and to index future increases to inflation.

We have not received a COLA in our DDS contracts since FY2007, yet we pay more for services such as snow removal, and ancillary services like OT, and PT. I am the person who renews the contracts and signs off on invoices for snow removal, vehicle expenses, repairs, etc. My contractors increase their pricing and we don't have a mechanism to offset those increases. We have to keep up with the rising cost of food, fuel, and other related expenses. Last week, I had 8 items in my grocery cart. Those 8 items cost \$156.32. I acknowledge that as the CCO I make a decent salary, but my direct line staff have to work more than one job to make ends meet. A \$156.32 grocery bill for them can mean the difference between feeding their families and paying a utility bill.

We all have the desire to retire one day. Marrakech offers a 401k for our employees. The organization contributes to the 401k on behalf of our employees. We have not had an agency 401k contribution since 2016. We want to be able to build salary increases and 401k contributions for our valuable employees.

Marrakech did not receive a COLA from FY 2008 through FY 2021. During this time our staff continued to provide exceptional service, and even knowing they would not see an increase, they showed up anyway. We were happy when we received the minimum wage increases to pay our direct line staff a little more. Keyword, a little more! That being said, the minimum wage increase caused a wage compression affecting our next-level employees. We had to dig deep into our pockets and increase the salaries of the next-level employees otherwise, our direct care staff would make close to or equal to what our managers are paid. We were not reimbursed for this expense. Further, people who have been working here for years are making practically the same wages as new entry-level employees. I am sure you can understand how problematic this is.

We want to continue to be partners of DDS and DMHAS. We want to be innovative and creative and help get people off the DDS waiting list. In order to do this, we cannot continue to lose money.

Please support increasing funding for community nonprofits by 9% in FY24 and 7% in FY25, and to index future increases to inflation.

Denise Canady
Marrakech, Inc.